

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 27, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to urge the U.S. Department of State to re-establish Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, a distinct minority in Southern Russia, as a group of “special humanitarian concern” for Priority-Two (P-2) processing for refugee status.

For nearly 70 years, the Ahiska Turkish community has faced statelessness, discrimination, and violent attacks in the former Soviet Union. Although the Ahiska Turkish diaspora, particularly in the United States, and various organizations have long advocated for resettlement assistance, the international community remains largely unresponsive. Most recently, media reports indicate that the Ahiska Turkish community is again being actively and severely persecuted as a distinct minority group in Southern Russia at every socio-economic and political level because of their ethnicity and religion, and we are concerned that the P-2 status, initiated in 2003 for Ahiska Turks, has been interrupted.

As you may know, under the P-2 status, nearly 12,000 Ahiska Turks came to the United States between 2004 and 2007, settling in Ohio, Illinois, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Pennsylvania, New York, Oregon, Missouri, Kentucky, Texas, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Virginia, and many other states. This resilient community has been able to fully integrate into American society, and has proven itself to be a great asset in their new home states by becoming entrepreneurs and creating opportunities for others.

Unfortunately, issues of human rights and the ethnic persecution of Ahiska Turks in Russia remain serious concerns. An October 2013 report by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, which dedicates a section to Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, indicated the situation in Southern Russia remains “very bad” for ethnic minorities. The report also goes on to explain that human rights organizations’ efforts to monitor and report on the situation have been met with “hostility by the authorities, including criminal investigations and prosecutions.”

Given the current human rights situation in Russia, especially continued reports of rising discrimination and harassment against certain minority groups, we fear that the conditions will not likely improve in the near future. Therefore, we believe it is time to reinstitute P-2 status for Ahiska Turks and continue to implement a successful refugee program that has not only improved the lives of refugees, but also enriched the communities they joined.

We appreciate your prompt attention to our request and look forward to your reply regarding the restoration of P-2 status to Ahiska Turks.

Sincerely,



STEVE STIVERS  
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS  
Member of Congress



MARK AMODEI  
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER  
Member of Congress



ANDRÉ CARSON  
Member of Congress



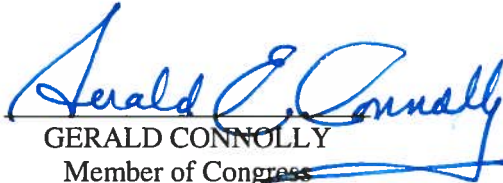
STEVE CHABOT  
Member of Congress



STEVE COHEN  
Member of Congress



TOM COLE  
Member of Congress



GERALD CONNOLLY  
Member of Congress



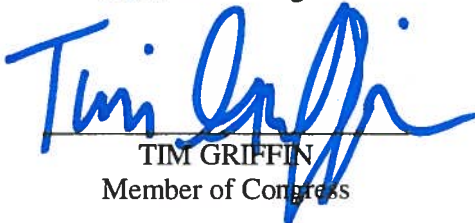
LOYD DOGGETT  
Member of Congress



VIRGINIA FOXX  
Member of Congress



ALAN GRAYSON  
Member of Congress



TIM GRIFFIN  
Member of Congress



RICHARD HANNA  
Member of Congress



HAKEEM JEFFRIES  
Member of Congress



EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON  
Member of Congress



BILL JOHNSON  
Member of Congress



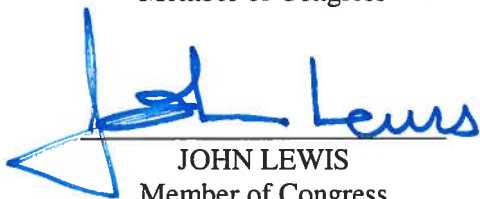
DAVID P. JOYCE  
Member of Congress



ADAM KINZINGER  
Member of Congress



LEONARD LANCE  
Member of Congress



JOHN LEWIS  
Member of Congress



DANIEL LIPINSKI  
Member of Congress



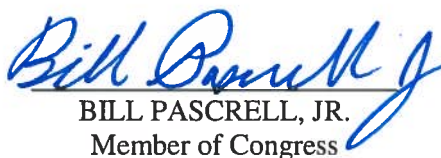
MARK MEADOWS  
Member of Congress



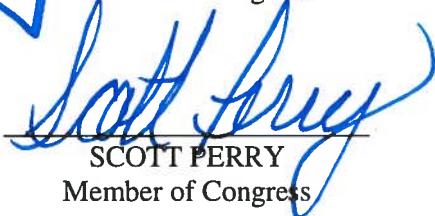
LUKE MESSER  
Member of Congress



JAMES MORAN  
Member of Congress



BILL PASCRELL, JR.  
Member of Congress



SCOTT PERRY  
Member of Congress



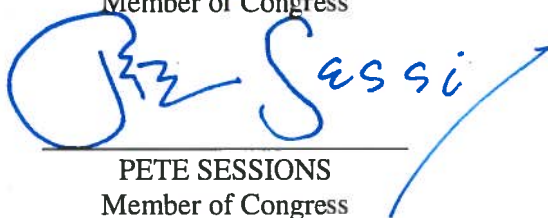
C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER  
Member of Congress



TIM RYAN  
Member of Congress



MATT SALMON  
Member of Congress



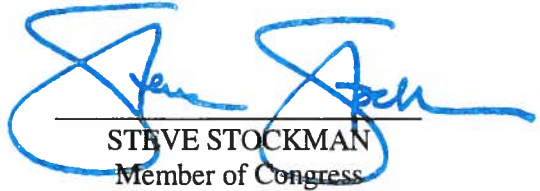
PETE SESSIONS  
Member of Congress



BILL SHUSTER  
Member of Congress



ADAM SMITH  
Member of Congress



STEVE STOCKMAN  
Member of Congress



MICHAEL TURNER  
Member of Congress



GREG WALDEN  
Member of Congress



ED WHITFIELD  
Member of Congress



JOE WILSON  
Member of Congress